1- Background Paper

Official and Equivalent Structures for Management of Parliamentary Work and Research Information Services Presented to Members of Parliament

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- Draft -

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Section 1: Official Structures for Research and Information Services

Introduction:

Undoubtedly democracy is one of the most important traits of the modern state. It has become recently a demand and a goal that many countries, especially in our Arab region, seek. More important, many foreign forces are intervening to "impose" democracy and to stress its importance and practice. The parliament is considered as one of the most important landmarks of the democratic society, with what it entails in terms of freedom, integrity of the elections, freedom of speech, political participation, etc. the parliament is seen as the embodiment of public sovereignty values, freedom, equality and political participation. It is also viewed as the most open and public-linked institution with regard to other authorities, since discussions are carried out within it publicly and openly.

The Parliament is viewed from two angles: the first, as the representative institution where citizens' opinions, demands and views are expressed; the second, as the main legislator or the jurisdiction holder in the legislative process, this is obviously apparent in the designation "Legislative Power."

There are many phases that the parliament went through to reach the its current state. It was a place for discussing financial resources, then a consultative committee and after that a legislative power. It has gained a set of monitoring tools, then some political specialties. "After elections," governments may emerge out of it. In addition to that, it has some modern roles, which have not received the adequate amount of studies in the Arab world: the increase of the parliament's foreign role, i.e. its role in foreign politics and parliamentary diplomacy.

In light of all that, and of the evolvement of the parliament as a representative institution, maintaining the public dimension and the parliament's representative aspect, and the

emergence of many complications and intricacies in the public life, not to mention the intertwining of the political, economic and social dimensions, the emergence of globalization, the disappearance of the relation between the outside and the inside, and the world being a global village, the parliament's role increased and it assumed many new responsibilities and tasks. Parliaments are now facing a technical dilemma in dealing with many of the events, issues or topics, in the frame of carrying out its main legislative, supervisory, political and financial functions. This required giving the parliament the institutional capability to face or go along with such challenges, in other words, developing and reinforcing the parliamentary institutional performance in order to serve the members. This supports the parliament in society and helps in balancing powers in the State, especially the Legislative and Executive Powers.

Undoubtedly, modern information systems represent one of the main requirements for the efficient performance of the institutions in general and the legislative ones in particular. The Egyptian parliament witnessed important developments, including the modernization and development of the organs relating to research and information. The various administrations within the General Secretariat of the People's Council are the official structure for providing this type of research and services.

Considering the nature and the role of the parliament in the political, practical and democratic life and the complication and entanglement of the various issues, and therefore increasing the parliament's and MPs' burden to obtain information in order to deal with cases and topics of various fields submitted to the parliament, the latter has become in need of a technical, specialized and large organ on order to provide the required information, and undertake the needed researches and studies to deal with such cases. Then, the General Secretariat of the People's Council plays an important role in drawing up and carrying out the parliament's work policy.

The Egyptian parliamentary system provided much technical and administrative assistance to MPs through its various organs. The main objective of this assistance is to enable the MP to carry out the legislative and supervisory function.

This paper aims at presenting a description and evaluation of the official institutional structures that offer research and information services in the parliament. What is meant by official institutional structure is the General Secretariat or the parliament's technical secretariat.

What are the official structures for information services in the parliament?
The official structures for information and research services in the parliament (People's Council) are the administrations and facilities that provide information services or those that assist MPs to carry out well the tasks entrusted to them. These structures and facilities are linked to the parliament, i.e. they work within it and according to its directives. Official structures are often represented in the parliament's (technical) General Secretariat, which is entitled to offer services of all kinds and categories to MPs, whether pertaining to information and research or other services.

To differentiate between official structures and equivalent structures, we can say that official structures follow the parliament, work on serving it and according to its rules and by-laws, which sets the exact tasks they carry out. On the contrary, equivalent structures work away from parliament and are not subject to it. Official structures are binding, available for all MPs without discrimination and free of charge, unlike equivalent structures, which are unbinding and no one interferes in setting the obligations and rights of the people in charge of it. They are usually not free of charge, or the MPs need more time and efforts to access them and benefit from them.

The by-laws of the People's Council represent the organizational and institutional context of the council's work. They are a set of rules governing and organizing the proceedings, activities and tasks of MPs and those working in the council (governed by a special by-law). The by-laws include a context for the structure of the council and its parliamentary organs, such as the Office committee, commissions, organizing the rights and obligations of MPs, or defining the vote and decision-making systems… they also include the structure of the parliamentary institution's technical organ (or subject to the decisions of the Speaker of the House or the Office committee).

In other words, the starting point in defining and setting the identity of "official structures is the People's Council's by-laws and the council's decisions concerning the organization of the technical organ or what is called the "Council's General Secretariat" in Egypt.

The by-laws define the jurisdictions of the Council's General Secretariat, in addition to the decisions and instructions of the Speaker of the House, considered as the first person in charge of the council's work as a whole. The jurisdictions are practiced according to what the by-law stipulates.

The General Secretariat of the People's Council with its different sections and administrations is considered a single unit subject the Speaker of the House.

The inner divisions of the official structures (the General Secretariat):

According to the People's Council's by-laws, the council tries to attract a group of experts and qualified people to provide the MPs with information and research services. The council tries to provide these services to assist MPs in performing their parliamentary functions. The selection of those people is done through examnations and tests to pick the best candidates capable of carrying out this task[1].

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[1] This is the first point which heavily affects the work of the council. since the beginning of the 90s and until 2004, the Council's didn't carry out by two exams only to choose researchers qualified to work in parliament, i.e. the number does not exceed 50 persons, after work continued on attracting the top of the graduates from economy, political science and law universities for only 4 to 5 years. This means that the number does not exceed 50 researchers. The rest of the employees in the Council's General Secretariat are recruited either by intermediary or patronage with no regard to qualification and specialization!!!

The Egyptian People's Council (like most Arab and foreign parliaments) adopts the "centralized" style in the work of researchers and technicians assisting MPs. The parliament would have a large general secretariat that forms the pool for MPs to get research and information services. The council is not forced to provide every MP with his/her own group of researchers, whether inside the council or in the electoral constituency, unlike the "non-centralized" style, which allocates financial or human resources for each MP and puts them under his direct authority. These resources would work in the MP's office in the parliament, the constituency or both. In that case, there would be no need for a large, centralized "General Secretariat". It then would have a role of coordination and mediation in most cases, as in the US Congress where the Congressman is allocated a budget and a plan to form his/her own office, which includes around 25 people between the Congress seat and the electoral constituency. The Congressman's choices include researchers, specialists and executives. The Senator, however, has a bigger budget and therefore his/her assisting crew is bigger (40-50 persons), unlike those working in the commissions in both councils. The distribution of the latter is divided between the majority and minority, where the former is allocated two-thirds of the resources of the commission and its staff, whereas the remaining third is reserved for the latter. The role of assisting staff in commissions is only to coordinate and serve the commission. Members as a whole, whether from the minority or the majority, are treated equally.

However, we should look at the official proposal from the legal and realistic points of view. Legally, the general secretariat includes a number of technical, administrative, and services units that form departments or internal structures, like the commissions department (which supervises the commissions' technical work as well as the performance of researchers and their distribution in various commissions), the information department (which includes the information center and the library…) and the financial and administrative affairs department (which includes employee affairs, assistance service and financial administration…), as well as units or administrations directly related to the Speaker of the House (like the Parliamentary Research Center), or independent (like the council police, the Office of the State Minister for the People's Council's Affairs, the Office of the Central Auditing Organ and the Military Facilities Office…).

From the realistic side, the output of this huge technical and administrative organ (more than 1200 persons) does not meet the MPs' needs of information and analyses. Indeed, the trend is on the increase towards outsourcing (extra-parliamentary) to get data, information and alternatives, such as the press, the media, unions, civil organizations, research centers and international reports. We also witness the emergence of the "Private Technical Office" established by some financially-capable people, especially businessmen.

Without going deeper in the details, we will move into identifying parliament emplyees, then the People's Council's internal division and the situation and role of the official structures.

Who are the employees of the official structures?
Before talking about the various structures and organs within the General Secretariat of the People's Council, we must deal with the organization of the affairs of the People's Council's employees, since it has a great influence on the performance and efficiency in the secretariat. If the Council's general secretariat offers the technical and administrative assistance for the MPs to enable them to efficiently carry out the legislative and supervisory functions, then it is important to know the rules governing and organizing the affairs of the council employees.

According the People's Council by-laws, the Speaker of the House oversees the council's genera; secretariat and all administrative, financial and technical affairs and workings of the council (By-laws – Article 402). The council also, upon suggestion from the Speaker's office, draws up by-laws to organize the affairs of those working in it; the by-laws would have the power of law. As to what has not been mentioned in these by-laws, the provisions applied on state civil workers are applicable on council employees (Article 403).

The Speaker of the House takes on the powers vested in the minister. He would also have the powers given to the Prime Minister or the minister dealing with financial affairs stipulated in laws and by-laws. The Speaker can also delegate some of his financial and administrative competences to one of his deputies.

According to Article 406 of the by-laws, the Secretary General of the People's Council is appointed by virtue of a decision from the council's office upon the proposal of his Chair. The Secretary General attends the council sessions and oversees all administrations and departments of the council's general secretariat. He is also accountable before the Speaker of the House on the good work of the council.

The council employees by-laws set the rules related to the appointment and promotion in the council's functions. The general secretariat announces the vacancies in the appointment categories. The announcement would include the information pertaining to the function and the terms for filling it. The council's office would set the rules related to the announcement. It also sets the vacancies that are to be filled through examinations and those without. The appointment in senior administration functions is done by virtue of a decision from the council's office, while appointment in the rest of the functions would be by virtue of a decision from the Speaker of the House after the approval of the emplyees' affairs commission.

With the compliance of the employee to the terms and descriptions of the function he/she is promoted to, the filling in of the work category is done through promotion from the work category that directly precedes it. Promotion from third category functions and up is through selection on the basis of suitability, while promotion to the rest of the functions is through selection or seniority according to the rules set by the council's office.

As for the financial rules related to the General Secretariat, the employee, upon appointment, receives the basic assessment for the work category he/she is appointed to and prevalent in the civil service law. Civil servants are given periodical raises, where the salary does not exceed the top of the financial level assessment with the start of the new fiscal year. Employees are also given additional benefits and incentives considering the special nature of their work. In addition, employees have independent social security system for illness and old age, through the employees fund for medical services and social care.

The official structures of the People's Council providing research and information services.
The following is a review of the official structures providing research and information services and technical support for MPs, annexed with a critical analysis of the quality of the performance and suggestions for development.

First- the Department of the Council's Presidency:

1- Director of the Office of the Speaker:
In other words it is the General Secretariat of the Speaker of the House, headed by the Director of the Speaker's Office. It consists of 3 people other than the director and specializes in organizing the presidency affairs ranging from appointment, meetings, outside meetings and reception of foreign delegations. It does not offer any information but specializes in the administrative affairs of the Speaker.

The Office of the Speaker includes three different administrations. The **first**, "the information office", specializes in information services for the Speaker. Its main task is providing the Speaker with main information about the visits he does or the parliaments he visits or hosts. This administration also keeps a full archive about the Speaker's participations in meetings on the Arab and international levels and prepares the press archive for the Speaker. The **second administration** specializes in the technological support of the Speaker – i.e. the Speaker's electronic information center – databases for MPs, legislative data and comparisons. The **third one** specializes in demands and serving the electoral constituency.

2- Parliamentary Research Center
The Parliamentary Research Center is considered a new direction lately added by the council to carry out a part of the load of offering parliamentary information and research. Around 18 researchers work in the Parliamentary Research Center. They come from various specializations, but mostly political sciences, economics and law. Some of the staff has higher academic degrees such as Masters and PhD.

The center – founded in 1996 and directly subject to the Speaker – aims at providing parliamentary research that help MPs in analyzing public policies and legislations in general and offering a summary and explanation for many specialized topics, especially in the economic and social fields as well as the recent topics such as technology and communication… the center also offers some views that express the public opinion's

perception and help MPs interact with the public opinion and be good in expression and representation.

In light of the modern technological and scientific advancement and the shift from the traditional method in managing parliaments and their work to using IT, parliamentary research moved from being a large scale research service into simplified services relying on offering analysis and information in pictures, graphics, statistics and graphs to express or describe the topic without going deep into details, hence aiding MPs in carrying out the tasks easily.

The philosophy of establishing the center lies in the following goals:
1- Encouraging renewal and innovation, supporting experience and independent opinion in research work, resorting to teamwork style, and encouraging the immediate response to the parliament's needs for information.
2- Defining specialties and competences within the work system in the center. This includes training the staff through ongoing training and guidance.
3- Providing reports and researches for MPs, commissions and concerned parties in the council. This provides the necessary opportunities for MPs to get the services of the center, as well as the possibility for commissions to benefit from them.
4- Organizing and strengthening the "pure service" concept and finding a suitable space for innovation and excellence in research work such as adapting the working system in the center according to the same parliamentary needs.
5- Guaranteeing continuity, i.e. making this research service wanted and beneficial for MPs as well as making it an integral part in the research structure in the same General Secretariat of the Legislative Power.
6- Measuring achievements through work and qualification standards and performance indicators as well as measuring performance satisfaction in order to rationalize the center's working system and research agenda.

Following what was mentioned, some of the most important factors that affect the Parliamentary Research Center's performance and which should be taken into account upon offering the service are:
1- Taking into consideration that topics and analyses are presented objectively and without the influence of any political or party affiliation.
2- taking into consideration the similarities and differences among MPs, since they represent different categories and political and party movements and are not a homogenous group in terms of educational and professional backgrounds.
3- Time, which is one of the most important things that should be taken into account when offering services. The flow, speed and entanglement of information and data make time a critical factor in offering information and services, whether in the speed of offering services or the ongoing and precise follow-up of current events and changes, as well as their impact on decision making.
4- Providing a complete and comprehensive database that complies with modern techniques and is continuously updated.

5- Precision, quality and service adaptation, as well as offering initiatives that are related to the facilitation of the parliamentary work and which can assist MPs upon discussing various topics.

The following are some of the most important suggestions to guarantee that the The Parliamentary Research Center carries out its optimal role:

First- establishing a special taskforce of independent experts that aren't biased to certain political movements. Academics should work alongside experts and specialists in certain fields. The opinion of some civil society organizations is also taken into account.

Second- developing the research staff according to needs, and considering the idea of delegating some research projects.

Third- linking the center's research agenda to the parliamentary agenda of the council as a whole, as well as what suits the needs of the MP for different research services (such as designing a questionnaire to know the needs of MPs for parliamentary research, studies and information).

Fourth- adopting the comparative method in parliamentary research, in order to shed light on experiences and other models in the related topic, whether historically and chronically, i.e. comparing with previous Egyptian experiences, or qualitatively, i.e. comparing with other Arab and international experiences.

3- Press and Media Administration

It consists of around 20 employees of different educational backgrounds and some of them are journalism and Humanities graduates. Some of them even write for the press, individually or even unofficially since the by-laws of the council employees affairs do not permit an employee to cumulate functions.

This administration carries out many activities such as:

- Providing the public opinion, through newspapers and different media, with press releases and media coverage – especially press coverage – for the council's work and general session, in addition to the commission's meetings and the activities of the Speaker of the House and the council's organs.
- Documenting press coverage for the council work in the form of press releases or reports.
- Coordinating the work of council-accredited parliamentary journalists and reporters and providing the services to assist them in their work (communications, reports, documents…)
- Giving other units in the council press information and reports like the council's bulletin, the council's newsletter, the library, the research administration, conferences administration, and information center administration.
- Documenting the relationship between the People's Council and different press associations and helping them in some of the press material, as well as documenting the council work and assisting in the monthly council newsletter.

Hence, the services of this administration are considered as not directed straight at MP. It is rather council's outer and media front or the council's link with the media and press. It would be unusual for MPs to resort to the services of this administration to use them in their parliamentary discussions.

Second: MPs Affairs department:
It includes the General Administration of MPs Affairs and is internally divided into services and demands of MPs in service ministries, production ministries and sovereign works. Around 35 persons work in that administration which takes care of the MPs' requests. These requests have a personal or service aspect and are mostly requests for the electoral constituency, i.e. of local aspect.

This administration is not concerned with offering research and information services for MPs, but in helping MPs in their own demands in concerned ministries, in other words, this administration establishes the relationship between the council and the government.

Third: Complaints and popular associations department:
This sector consists of two administrations in which more than 25 people work, mostly in administrative work. One administration specializes in complaints and the other in popular associations. This administration represents the relationship between the parliament and the public opinion, since it receives the people's and the public opinion's demands and complaints. This administration is not concerned with providing information and research to MPs.

From this administration branch out the offices of the parliamentary committees of the parties represented in the People's Council. They are currently 4 committees: the National Democratic Party, the New Delegation Party, the Gathering Party and the Nasseri Party, unlike the headquarters for independents "that are not affiliated with any political party."

Fourth- the Administrations that are subject to the Secretary General:
Before dealing with them, we shall first briefly list the main competences of the Secretary General of the People's Council, as stipulated by the council's by-laws:
- Supervising and following up on the works of the parliament commission and administration and coordinating between them.
- Supervising, inspecting and ensuring the fast completion of all correspondences issued by the council after it has been completed by the concerned parties in the council.
- Attending parliament sessions and supervising the drawing up of the sessions' minutes, as well as carrying out what the Speaker asks him to do during sessions.
- Preparing draft agendas of the council's sessions, and of its commissions and permanent office and ensuring their distribution in the right time.
- Participating in conferences and foums upon the decision of the council's permanent office, as well as submitting to the Speaker reports on the activities discussed in these conferences and forums.

- Representing the council's general secretariat in associations of Secretary Generals of Arab, regional and international parliaments.
- Working with the administration directors in the council, on increasing employees' efficiency, improving their functional performance and developing their knowledge.
- Periodically reviewing, along with the commissions' secretaries in the council, of the evaluation of the functional performance of the council's staff and working on developing it.
- Taking charge of the general secretariat of the international parliamentary branch and supervising the organization of its secretariat and work. The Secretary General would be accountable for it before the branch chief.

The structure subject to the secretary general consists of three main departments – unlike the administrations of research, conferences and international communications:

1- The secretary general's technical office

It consists of around 30 researchers, administrators and people in charge of the written work. The secretary general's technical office assists him in some special tasks, such as:

a- Preparing the agenda items for the council sessions.
b- Registering, indexing and following-up on the demands submitted by MPs.
c- Preparing the Speaker's portfolio for each session. It would contain the speeches and demands of MPs, in addition to the modifications on topics discussed by the council.
d- Assisting in the works of the Egyptian parliamentary branch participating in international forums and meetings.

Some of the most important needs of the secretary general's technical office are:

1- Working on providing it with PCs. That way every researcher would have an independent device in order to save time and effort. Making sure that members of the secretary general's technical office, especially the researchers, receive continuous training.
2- Making sure not to sink into administrative and coordinative issues and to be more focused on technical things and MP assistance. The office would focus on the organizational issues procedures and on organizing MPs' speeches and interventions.
3- Providing employees with some technical specialized training programs to help them in performing their tasks.

2- The legal affairs and investigations department

This department includes around 15 jurists, all law school graduates. It is concerned with investigating with the council employees and organizing issues related to them. This department is not concerned with providing services and information to MPs.

3- Information center

Information, research and relevant services represent the council's main element for running the technical, administrative and financial works, in addition to offering all necessary services and facilities so that MPs carry out their tasks and functions.

Undoubtedly, IT and communication played a major role in modernizing and developing the parliamentary performance. It also helped in developing parliamentary work, and parliaments themselves even. We now find that most parliaments depend on technology, automation and computerization in all their activities starting form administrative and financial affairs, research services, archiving operations and library up to session management.

The information center is not concerned with providing research and information services to MPs as much as it is concerned with offering technological assistance and training for employees and sometimes for MPs, many of whom "refrain from such training programs." The center primarily plays the role of the council's website on the World Wide Web and tries to assist researchers in different administrations via the council's intranet for data and information exchange between different commissions and administrations.

The following are some services carried out by the information center:
1- Working on providing PCs for researchers in various commissions and administrations.
2- Providing legal databases and working on categorizing, indexing and permanent updating of laws.
3- Assisting in preparing statements relating to administrative and financial administrations.
4- Archiving on magnetic floppies or CDs.
5- Electronically organizing and indexing the council's library.
6- Working on designing the council's website, continuously updating its data, working on offering the site in more than one language, and linking it with the different parliamentary websites of the world.

We can identify a set of challenges or shortfalls in the information center as follows:
1- The center is not concerned with providing statistics and comparative studies about different topics offered to the council.
2- The center does not provide the comparative legal study nor the similar laws in other countries, which the council discusses in any time.
3- The center does not continuously update databases: it provides minutes and council-approved laws after a long period of time.
4- There is a great shortage in the English and French website.
5- The center does not publish the various council publications such as the analytical and documentary report for the council's work during sessions or the studies that the General research administration might prepare, as well as using the foreign expertise and studies as in the parliamentary research center.

Fifth- Commissions Secretariat:
The qualitative commissions in the council are considered as the "main kitchen" of the council work. There are 18 permanent qualitative commissions in the council, not to

mention general, private or joint commissions. They direct and guide the various council proceedings. Commissions discuss all legislations and agreements and draw up related reports that are submitted to the council. They also discuss the supervisory tools that are referred to them by the council and carry out field visits. They might be entrusted with preparing fact-finding reports, i.e. the commissions are considered the spokesman of the council in a simplified, yet more precise and specialized fashion. The MPs join the commissions that they find compatible with their qualifications, specializations and interests.

The burden of carrying out the previously mentioned tasks falls on the researchers in the qualitative commissions, which the council is keen on carefully selecting in order for them to be a help and support for MPs. Commissions might also call for some specialists and experts to carry out some tasks and assignments.

The commissions' organizational structure consists of a number of researchers headed by the commission secretary and followed by an assisting secretary, some administrators and employees. All of them are involved in facilitating the work of the commission. The organizational structure of each commission consists of around 25 researchers, some administrative assistants and people in charge of the written work.

IT and communications play a large role in the commissions' performance because they facilitate their work performance. Permanent commissions have been equipped with some PCs and provided with communication with the World Wide Web, in addition to setting up a group of training programs for researchers for enabling and training them to use such technology for achieving their goals.

Some of the main needs for those working in qualitative commissions are:
1- Taking care of the continuity of training sessions and intensifying them in the language domain, especially Arabic.
2- Making sure the commissions are equipped with enough PCs so that each and every researcher has his/her own device.
3- Increasing the incentive for researcher in order to excel in their work, i.e. establishing remunerative incentives to increase work competition among employees, like allowing training sessions and exchange with other countries, for example.
4- Making sure that commissions are provided with a sufficient number of specialists in various topics, especially legal ones.

Among the secretariats assisting the session's affairs secretariat there is a group of other secretariats that specialize in facilitating procedures and issues related to general sessions and commissions meetings. The commissions' affairs secretariat is specialized in preparing the sessions' draft agenda, preparing and writing the minutes of the sessions and carrying out the decision issued by the council. This secretariat carries out its role according to the provisions of the council's by-laws.

The sessions affairs secretariat consists of the two following sectors:
1- Précis writing department.
It specializes in supervising the writing of the minutes of the general sessions, technically reviewing draft minutes, checking the contents' coherence and proofreading it. The by-

laws stipulate that the session's minutes be distributed among MPs for reviewing, voting and ratification and then publishing in the official gazette. No correction can be claimed in the minutes after ratification.

2- Sessions service department:

It specializes in preparing the council sessions' draft agenda to be submitted to the Speaker, in counting all council reports and decisions and supervising the shorthand work.

The sessions service department consists of the following general administrations:
- The general administration of the agenda.
- The general administration for decision enforcement.
- The general administration for indexing and statistics.
- the general administration for reviewing
- The general administration for shorthand.

1- The general administration of the agenda. Its main tasks are receiving and collecting all issues set to be included the council agenda.
2- The general administration for decision enforcement: some of its main specializations are registering draft laws, law suggestions, law decisions and republican decision in international agreements in agendas and taking procedures of their referral to concerned commissions according to the council's decisions in this regard.
3- the general administration for indexing and statistics: some of its main specializations are preparing an index for every minute of the agenda and for all decisions taken concerning every topic submitted to the council, in addition to preparing a general and thematic alphabetical index for the contents of the minutes in every sessions and preparing statistics related to the council's activity in every session. This included the following main issues:
4- The general administration for shorthand some of its main specializations are the necessary shorthand of the sessions workings of the council and the rest of its organs.
5- The general administration for reviewing: some of its main specializations are receiving the sessions minutes according to their number and supervising their printing, proofreading and correction, as well as proofreading and correcting the statements and publication issued by the council.

It is noted that most pre-mentioned administrations are not, to a great extent, responsible for research and information services. Yet the importance of their lies in that their work assists the organs based on parliamentary research and information services.

Sixth- parliamentary library

The parliamentary library can be identified as a type of libraries that serves MPs and those who are working in parliaments' general secretariats, in addition to those interested and specialized in the parliamentary life, in order to help them to:

1- Issue legislations that facilitate the work of the state and its institutions and serve its citizens.
2- Get acquainted with work atmosphere of similar parliaments and therefore benefit from their information, not to mention receiving the different services offered by libraries such as current awareness, selective information transmission and other librarian services.

The library's main function is working on offering assistance to MPs and providing them with information to support them in their parliamentary activity, working on offering them different expertise and making their acquaintance with different experience in world countries easier.

The organizational structure of the library of the People's Council includes a number of units, such as:

- **The prints sector**, which includes different types of books and periodicals, but mostly of the legal and political genre, as well as providing the prints related to some international organization such as United Nations, the African Union and the Arab League.
- The large press archive, **where the library objectively and chronically collects newspaper and magazines cutouts in the shape of information files of the most important local and international discussed subjects.**
- Internet services: **in alignment with the technical advancement and the flow of information, the library has been equipped with a number of PCs and terminals connected with the council's mainframe. Work is also being carried out to lay out an intranet that connects all information sector administrations.**
- **Services and research sector**: the library introduced the general administration for research services. It prepares computer files concerning many important subjects and cases and research location. The files can be under the form of summaries, reports, background papers and analyses.
- **Microfilm unit**: a unit for documenting, archiving and retrieving the library's possessions and all rare and important parliamentary minutes in Egyptian parliamentary history.
- **Audiovisual unit**: it provides the service of listening to and watching all possessions of the library, as well as transmitting all the works of the council.
- **Photography and printing service**: this unit aims at offering photography, copy and print services for researchers in the council's general secretariat and MPs to help them in preparing research, reports and files.

The role of the parliamentary library is not supposed to be limited to collecting and readying books and studies, but **to try and conclude some results form the databases collected.**

Seventh- Conferences administration

The Conferences administration consist of around 15 researchers of different specialization, especially form the faculties of economy and political science. Some of the most important tasks of this administration are the drawing up of and technical preparation for the participation of the delegation that represent the Egyptian parliamentary branch in conferences and meetings held in the context of international and regional organizations of which the People's Council is member, such as the International Parliamentary Federation, the Arab Parliamentary Federation, the African Parliamentary Federation (soon to be a Parliament for all Africa), the International association for Francophone MPs, the Parliamentary Association for the Council of Europe, as well as qualitative and specialized parliamentary meetings in which the councils takes part. The administration registers the decision that these meetings have reached and their implementation possibility. Moreover, the Conferences administration prepares the technical report related to the Egyptian parliamentary branch activity in a year, as well as preparing memos and decision drafts prepared on behalf of the branch in the above-mentioned meetings and forums. The administration also prepares studies derived from the constitutional information bulletin issued by the International Parliamentary Federation.

The General Administration for Parliamentary Conference plays an important role in supporting and activating the role of the Egyptian parliamentary branch in practicing the parliamentary diplomacy as follows:

Sets up the technical secretarial administration of the parliamentary branch of the People's Council. The administration would specialize in the technical and scientific contribution of the Egyptian parliamentary branch in all of the international and regional conference and forums as follows:

- preparing a file that includes comprehensive information about the country in which the conference is held (internationally or regionally) or which a council delegation is visiting – especially what is related with foreign policy issues, the most important parliamentary figures in the host country and the situation of the legislative council in it.
- Receiving the correspondences and documents coming form the International Parliamentary Federation and other parliamentary organizations, preparing what is necessary for theses correspondences and showing them to the Secretary General so he can take a decision about them.
- Preparing for the parliamentary branch meetings, registering what goes on in these meetings and the decisions reached and taking the required procedures for their implementation and pursuing their implementation.
- Preparing the yearly follow-up reports about the Egyptian parliamentary branch activity as to the works of each parliamentary organizations and meeting the secretaries of the federation or concerned organization.
- Preparing suggestions about the most important bilateral cases with which discussions between the representatives of the Egyptian branch and representatives of other parliamentary branches can deal, in the context of the visits they do to other parliaments or those in which they receive delegations representing these parliaments.

Eight- the General Administration for International Communications
This administration includes 10 women, i.e. no man works in this administration. The women are mostly aged between 45 and 55 years!

Supposedly, the role of this administration is, when for example a delegation of the council is traveling to visit any of the world's parliaments, to prepare a sufficient memo about that parliament's country, including an analysis of its political, parliamentary and party system, as well as an analysis of its foreign policy trends and its position towards the most important cases prevailing on the international scene. The administration also analyzes the level of bilateral relations between this country and Egypt and the means to strengthen them in the future, while this responsibility falls on the shoulders of the Secretary General's technical office and the conferences administration.

Ninth- General Research Administration
The Egyptian parliament witnessed important developments in modernizing and developing research and information organs. Probably the most important was the creation of a special administration for research services. This administration prepares fi8les about central cases that concern MPs and are connected with the wok of commissions and serving researchers in the council. The administration includes around 30 researchers from different specializations, mostly Economy and Political Science graduates, as well as some jurist and letters, commerce and agriculture graduates.

The administration's main function is being the technical secretariat for the special commission that answers the government statement and that is headed by one of the Speaker's two deputies. The General Research Administration also prepares the analytical and comparative studies and the summarized memos that are based on the scientific method rules. These rules force the MP to be versed in all his/her specializations and to take the rational decision about the subjects submitted to the council. In addition, the administration provides the special commission that answers the PM's statement about the ministry's program with papers to analyze and evaluate general policies and carrying out the comparative study between the government statement and the reply commission, in addition to the final analysis of the reply commission's discussions. Finally, the administration prepares an analytic report about the council's performance in every session, accompanied with statistical data and explicative graphs. The report would be in two sections: one is a documenting report for the works of the council and the second is an analytical report.

Some of the main suggestions that assist the administration:
1- Providing sufficient and suitable PCs for the researchers in the administration and facilitating the connection to the web.
2- Making sure that specialized training sessions continue, especially outer-parliament sessions, i.e. communicating with the outside world to get acquainted with and simulate the new.

3- Trying to provide a group of researchers for a period of time to help in some services, especially providing quick information for MPs and the organs of the secretariat.

4- Facilitating the obtainment of international prints and documents, which help researchers in performing their work, especially during the drawing up of the report of the commission that answers the government's statement.

Tenth- The People's Council Bulletin

The general secretariat made a huge development in the sources of parliamentary information, namely: People's Council Bulletin published biweekly on average in a good artistic format and contains the gist of the council's activity and the MPs affairs. The bulletin gives MPs the chance to know the important rulings issued by the High Constitutional Court, especially in the issues of monitoring the constitutionality and opposition of laws. Investing in developing this bulletin has reason to be strengthened, due to what it means in publishing policy, editing committee, a structure for section, a strategy for goal setting and material and human resources to achieve these goals.

The bulletin includes a comprehensive preview for all aspects of parliamentary activity in the legislative, supervisory, financial and political fields, as well as the practice of parliamentary diplomacy in all parliamentary meetings and occasions and a follow-up of the activity of the Speaker, the council's different organs and the works and reports of the permanent qualitative commissions and some special commissions. The bulletin also records parliamentary precedents that the council has established, and follows the ministers' written responses to questions and information questions submitted by the MPs, as well as the responses of the ministries to public demands.

Eleventh- Training Administration

The Egyptian parliament has a special training administration as one of its internal organs. The administration aims at upgrading the level of the employees in the council's general secretariat. Some administrations also offer some special training sessions for MPs, especially in the IT field.

As to the evaluation of the training process, there two kinds of training:

1- **The administration carries out by itself the training process**. It is the training offered by the administration about the council workings, preparing parliamentary reports and research and commission reports, in addition to some specialized language trainings, especially in Arabic. We find that the by-laws of employees affairs stipulates that, in order to be fixed in the council's general secretariat, employees must pass two training sessions.

2- **Counting on other parties, from inside or outside the council.**
   Inside the council, it would be a cooperation with the different administrations or commissions to train them on their works. Outside the council, it might be through either a complete outsourcing of the training process, as in the training offered by faculties of economy or humanities – library section or through a joint training process between the two sides.

In case other parties participated in the training process, these parties may be:

1- international:

That may be through the joint cooperation between that party and the council's training administration, like the training sessions with the Red Cross and Red Crescent, especially in the field of human rights and international humanitarian law.

This international party may offer the training session, either by traveling abroad or by training the employees inside the parliament. Some of the main examples for this was the CRS's offering of a training for some council employees by traveling to the US to train on research principles. This was followed by an offer from the center to another group of researchers, but this time the training was inside the Egyptian parliament.

2- local

It can be either under the form of a joint supervision (like the Faculty of Humanities – Documentation Department or with the Faculty of Economy) or by buying the service like Microsoft for example.

Some of the recommendations relating to the training process are:

- Conforming to the work demands concerning timing, trainee quality and scopes and subjects of training programs.
- Pursuing the training process since it is an ongoing process. Therefore, the training plan must be cumulative and ongoing and complementary with a temporary trainee evaluation.
- The training program must emphasize benefiting from IT, especially since we are living in the information age.
- Training programs must help in creating a group of trainers from within the parliament to carry out the training processes later on.

It is clear from the quick previous review that the development in the parliamentary information systems calls for appreciation and elicits some suggestion to support this development in other complementary fields.

On the **one** hand, the training field witnessed a great quantitative and qualitative development allowing the employees more opportunities to develop and diversify their skills. Training now covers politics, economy, law, public and governmental finance, organizational behavior, leadership, computer and internet skills, English language and specialized programs for library employees for example. This represents thousands of training hours offered by an elite of academic and professional experts.

On the **other** hand, the main/intellectual structure witnessed huge development in IT, computers and electronic networks, not to mention the contact with advanced foreign expertise in this field. This strengthens the council's capability on automating and modernizing work systems.

In spite of that, there are some areas that need extra attention. Some of them are:

- the **training** strategy, so it can open horizons for **intermediate and senior leaders** to contact the various foreign expertise on one hand and to keep on modernizing management methods and working systems on the other. Moreover, the trend favoring **on-site training** should be promoted, in

order to become more widespread and a tool to counter real problems faced by employees in their daily work. Experts carrying out the training should be **of diverse disciplines** and work should be done to make use of people with **long experiences** in parliamentary research. It is necessary also to combine between theoretical training an practical training, through providing the necessary equipment for that (PCs for instance)

- As for the **MPs**, it is worth mentioning the importance of intensifying the communication with MPs to see to what extent they understand the nature of the developments in the legislative information systems on one hand and their renewed suggestions and needs on the other, in addition to facilitating the means of communication with other legislative systems in the West (USA, France, UK…) and in the developing countries that are advanced in this field (India, Asian tigers…), especially in light of the possible challenges that the parliamentary work might face to keep up with the economic developments in markets and current world blocs.

- As for **IT**, computerization has become a characteristic of the modern parliamentary work, since it saves time and effort. It also provides a higher degree of precision, and the possibility of storing and retrieving information facilitating the quick delivery of information required for the parliamentary work.

From this perspective, a simplified work plan for the near future can be laid as follows:

First: MPs

- Trying to provide the opportunities of comparative analyses with other legislative systems.
- Encouraging the tendency to make use of the legislative information systems within the parliament itself.
- Encouraging research organs to deal with subjects that have priority with MPs, to present them in a comparative style and to make use if the public opinion polls.
- Supporting commissions' capabilities especially for serving the parliamentary decision making (especially commissions of plans and budgets as well as economy, legislative, agriculture, industry and suggestions and complaints commissions).
- Providing the adequate training opportunities for MPs and allowing the chances to get acquainted with successful parliamentary experiences, whether in Arab or modern world parliaments.
- Motivating and encouraging competition between MPs in parliamentary participations, especially legislative and supervisory participation, as well as announcing ongoing statistics about the MPs' participation in the parliament's different discussions.

Second- in the field research and analysis

- Supporting the researchers' analytical capabilities in the methodical and technical fields and focusing on other experiences and comparative studies.

- Developing and modernizing the quality of reports and research services in the parliament, in addition to providing the necessary technical equipment (PCs, cameras…) and supporting the capabilities of the researchers regarding language or translation to facilitate knowing international experiences in many fields especially legislative and political ones.
- Showing interest in practical training on the most recent analysis means and parliamentary and political research methods, and working ongoing parliamentary modernization and development.
- Providing researchers with contact opportunities (from the Secretary General's technical office, commissions, information and research management center, parliamentary research center, research services administration, conferences administration and the library) with distinguished experiences, locally and internationally, through discussions, forums and workshops, inside and outside the parliament, especially in Arab parliaments and other regional and international parliaments.
- Intensive attention to newly-born units in the research work field, which are the Research Services Administration and Parliamentary Research Center.

Third- Information Technology IT (in the library)
- Developing the library's administrative and planning capabilities and supporting technology in library work.
- Helping in shaping the library's mission to serve the legislator and researchers in charge of serving the legislator.
- Developing the library employees' research capabilities through training programs and practical workshops, and developing the administration concerned with preparing work papers and collecting and indexing different themes.
- Developing and helping in executing the library automation plan to go into the 21st century.
- Planning on developing the library possession's and working on providing it with the latest books and studies on different activities and fields.

Fourth- institutional development
- The priority of the object of sustained development and the continuation of the momentum of current developments through parliamentary organs themselves.
- Improving IT and information systems to support the institutional development in the parliament (administrative and planning capabilities to keep up with the introduction of modern technologies.
- Developing human capabilities in setting and solving parliamentary institutional problems.

Fifth- Managing and following up on the council's different activities

- Continuing on developing and applying the evaluation and follow-up system (through questionnaires, research administration records and commissions activities…)
- Making use of evaluation and follow-up results to develop parliament activities as well as services and assistance offered by some donor nations.
- Transferring of experience in the evaluation and follow-up system to parliament-concerned organs.

After listing this group of suggestions for the parliamentary work as a whole and how to guarantee the council's good use of the research and information services offered by the parliament's official structures, we will list in this last part if the paper a set of questions, trying to answer them is related to how much the official structures can offer the required technical support to MPs. We will focus on the council's legislative side since the parliament's common name is legislative power, i.e. the authority that is entitled to issue, discuss and approve legislations, in addition to approving the state's general plan and budget and the final accounts, which are all issued through laws.

We can view these questions as follows:
- Do we consider that the People's Council had a clear line or a definite legislative policy?
- Does the parliament really resort to the laws and decision stipulated by the introduction of the laws submitted mostly (95%) by the government?
- Does the parliament take into consideration the study of draft laws – and surveys the public opinion as it should – and the previous laws issued by the council?
- Are studies and different opinions to estimate costs and revenues due to the application of different laws, legislations and policies adopted by the council available to MPs?
- Does the MP study the impact of law application on different categories, on markets and the competition therein, as well as the public's reaction following the application of the law?
- Is the MP allowed to know other experiences, the results of application of similar laws in these countries and their past experiences in that field?

Without asking any more questions, Arab parliaments in general, and here is a case study of the People's Council in Egypt, are far from answering such questions, since that:
- We cannot say that the People's Council has a legislative policy. Most laws are submitted by the government and approved by the council. Even though the latter adds many amendments to them, in the end it is not the one who proposes them and it does not establish a legislative policy to work by. The government, for instance, even though it sets a legislative policy which aims at approving in parliament with the assistance of the majority party, suffers from some confliction in the laws it presents. For example, there is a confliction between the law of guarantees and investment incentives and the law of economic areas of special nature.

21

Many investors in areas of special nature resort to working under the law of guarantees and investment incentives and not the law of economic areas of special nature due to the incentives and advantages that the law offers.

- All laws presented by the government refer in their beginning to many laws. Rarely the council consults these laws to see the related or similar articles between the two laws. Laws are always issued without these introductions and therefore, the average reader does not know such laws, which some of its provisions are adopted or based upon.

- Liker other sides, the People's Council faces the problem of the lack of transparency in data and information as well as the problem of getting them from another side. For example, there is not a single figure that two offering sides agree upon. For instance, the central bank, the economic or monthly bulletin of the Ministry of Industry and Foreign Trade and the central organ for general mobilization and statistics offer different and conflicting economic figures which all cannot be depended upon. Stranger still, there is no agreement of the population figure in Egypt. Even the authorities that are competent in the census do not have matching data.

- There is no specific law to publish and transfer data and information in Egypt. This causes many problems.

- The council is based on that MPs represent the people. After that it will not be interested in relying on polls offered by some assisting outer organs (equivalent structures). The council also tends to amend article in laws and foes not reject them for example.

- The council or the general secretariat do not offer comparative studies of experiences of other nations, since the research capabilities may not be available as well as the time window for MPs to study the submitted draft laws due to the short time available for the council and its workings. When the government submits laws and urges the council to adopt they will not studied well.

- Not all commission researchers have the capability to use foreign languages to know the experiences in the same field in more modern countries. Many written works to document minutes of meetings and council sessions help in save the time given to researchers to work on different fields.

- Low returns received by researchers in comparison with the work submitted and lack of material or moral incentives to increase competition among researchers in order to excel in the work they do.

- Rarely does a MP intend to study the impact of law application on citizens. Many MPs adopt the general purpose of the law or often the "slogans" that the government adopts to help in approving the law. Thus, the impact of application in not taken into account suitably or as desired.

Part II: Parallel Structures of Research and Information Services

Transparency in the Parliament work, or this is how things should be, made MPs largely subject to political accountability, whereas commitment exceeds, literally, the internal list rules. It is now a political custom that MPs work hard to enhance their information and analysis capabilities as a prerequisite to improve their parliamentary performance, and hence, their position among voters and public opinion. In other words, information is now a pillar to support the "Parliament" decision maker.

The main value of this information is to promote the Parliament competence, and the parliamentary aspect of the overall Order. The legislative process and the Parliament's decision making both require a deep knowledge in many ideas and various social interests. This requires the existence of regular institutions and mechanisms to gather and analyze information, make reports, and draft possible alternatives. These mechanisms can be formal as well as informal and parallel.

For example, many developments may occur in the Parliament structure where there can be many members seeking information and find themselves less satisfied with the quality of information services provided by the Parliament's formal structure. As a result, they would look for a technical support outside the Parliament and become more dependent on the external source to a degree that they would constantly rely on the external source, even if they keep routinely using the Parliament's technical body services. In this respect, we talk about an external source (the Parliament's Technical Secretariat). Consequently, parallel structures are defined as "additional" structures taking place inside the Parliament.

This report aims at exploring parallel information structures which are revealed by the People's Assembly in Egypt, and setting them in a theoretical frame which helps conduct a comparison with other cases. It also allows assessing performance and suggesting alternatives in order to promote the information competence of the Parliament discussions.

Theoretical Frame

Parallel structures represent "the additional mechanisms and processes taking place in the institution, without any legal obligation regarding their continuity or outcomes". The preliminary point in defining these structures is, hence, their relation with the formal legal frame which does not make them obligatory, i.e. is not applied when determining their actors' duties and rights. These structures would at times appear and work intensively, while they would disappear at other times, or their performance level and quality outputs would change.

The word parallel includes seven important indications regarding the relation between the formal structure and informal structures. The <u>first indication</u> is that there is no organic relation between these two types of structures, since one of them does not deny the existence or contradict the other, even if they were both in a state of political competition and "conflict of interests". For this reason a current Parliament may not exist without parallel structures providing its members with researches, information, and political opinion.

The <u>second indication</u> is that parallelism between formal and informal structures does not mean an equivalence, similitude, or replication between both types. It is rather alike the relation between the shadow cabinet and the existing government, i.e. decision making remains de jure the authority of the formal structure, even though decision "making" process extends it or happens de facto in informal structures. Consequently, informal structure is not evident (even if it exists as a universal phenomenon), whereas formal structure is a vital condition for informal structures since the formal structure is the core, while other mechanisms, processes, and informal structures providing parliamentary research and information services are considered as the shadow. If this approach is correct, the third indication becomes then definitely rational.

This <u>third indication</u> tackles the nature of the equation between the formal structure and informal structures. In spite of confirming that different Parliaments in the world and most of MPs deal with parallel structures for research and information services, on different scales and for various reasons… despite the services quality of parallel structures … and the realism of the theory on creating demand that was used by parallel structures such as goods and service promotion, the demand on the parallel structures "market" grows with the formal structure deviating from its public goals or failing to meet its institutional obligations vis-à-vis MPs, in the same way as the shadow of a person standing under vertical sun rays. In this case, his shadow is barely seen, and when the person deviate, his shadow appears and grows as the deviation angle increases. In other words, there is a reverse direct relation between the formal structure competence and the demand on parallel structures in the Parliament and MPs' technical support.

As for the <u>fourth indication</u>, it is about the faculty to accountability, where the formal structure should be subject to accountability, for it is the considered as the Parliament's institutional and technical base, since it is composed of a group of technical and professional experts who are working for the Parliament, have professional obligations towards it, and are on the functional level under the command an administrative manager (chief clerk, secretary general, …). Nevertheless, these parallel structures and their concerned people are not subject to the Parliament accountability.

The <u>fifth indication</u> focuses on the ability to duplication and change. On one hand, only the formal structure speaks on behalf of the Parliament and the services and information it provides are accessible to all MPs (according to the rules of information exchange in internal lists and Parliament customs), while informal structures' services and data do not represent the parliamentary institution, even when MPs really used them. On the other hand, the formal structure and parallel structures both change, however, only parallel

structures can be duplicated and replicable, whereas there is just one formal structure, i.e. the Parliament Technical Secretariat (it is the reason for which this word is used in the singular for "formal structure" and in the plural form for "parallel structures").

As to the sixth indication, it is related to the meaning of the word "structures", since it is a description and an analysis expression, and not necessarily a good reflection of the situation. In this report introduction parallel structures were defined as a few mechanisms and processes, but they are not absolutely linked to organic relations that make them as parts or units within a structure, have differentiated functions, or be connected together by institutional relations and bounds within a largely recognized chain of command… all that does not apply to the expression "parallel information structures", even if it may be applied to all or some lobbies.

Finally, the seventh indication in the term "parallel" information structures is related to the difference between parallel structures and lobbies. While lobbies use to the highest degree information services as a means of pressure, they don't content themselves with information, but also have other means to influence decisions, such as joint interests among lobbyers and legislators (that's why they are called interest groups as well as lobbies). As for parallel information structures, they don't necessarily take the form of lobbies, but they can consist of small groups or even individuals that are not connected to legislators by joint interests, and don't seek to have an influence on legislators by exerting pressure. They can yet be like a remunerated or volunteer advisor. Parallel structures may also include individuals who work in the formal structure, but provide their services outside their official roles, whether by their own will or by force, as when an official in the government, now an MP, asks people working under his service to provide him with information services which support his parliamentary activity, away from his work or from their public work… these are all real images of parallel structures of parliamentary researches and information in Egypt.

Suggestion for Parallel Structures Classification

Parallel structures can be examined via three angles, each one having a special classification for parallel structures in the field of parliamentary information and researches. The first angle consists of looking at the service route and raises the following question: where does this information end? Is it going to be used for example in parliamentary discussions, or the MP would get it and use it for outside parliamentary discussions, i.e. away of the Parliament work direct scope?

The second angle focuses on determining the "service requester", and offers various possibilities, some of which state that the beneficiary or the parallel structures' service requester is an MP, a Parliament commission, or the technical body of the Parliament itself (taking the form of outsourcing).

As for the third angle, it highlights the nature of the service provider, and raises the following questions: what are the existing parallel structures? What is their relation with the service requester/provider? (for example: are these parallel structures formed of

volunteers, remunerated employees, civil society organizations, international instances, professional advisors, or public and governmental institutions..?).
Examples of these parallel structures in Egypt will be illustrated below.

First Angle: what is the service route?

We mean by the service route the place where parliamentary information and researches are used. Naturally, it immediately comes to the mind that they are used in parliamentary discussions. But the question here is: are they only used inside the Parliament? According to this criterion, information services take two routes: the first one inside the Parliament, and the second outside the Parliament.

1.   when used inside the Parliament

There are many goals where MPs use the parliamentary information and researches provided by parallel structures, which can be represented as follows:

(First) The Use of parliamentary information and researches in legislation

a- Draft laws proposals:
They are rare due to the difficulty in drafting them in a firm legal frame by MPs, as well as their high material cost due to the fact that they need experts and professionals in the domain. It is then noted that most of parallel structures do not look for presenting legislative initiatives such as "draft laws proposals for MPs, but content themselves with their initial role, i.e.:

- Present information and studies about the topic generally debated.
- Seek to give advice and guidance to change or amend "some article" regarding draft laws submitted by the government.
- May seek to present comparative studies on the draft law submitted by the government. What countries precede us in the implementation process, not in terms of real implementation but of adoption by the Parliament!

Most of MPs don't benefit or request services or legislative initiatives from parallel structures, since the government would hasten or take the initiative, along with previous difficulties, to submit laws, in order that MPs proposals would be considered as amendments to submitted draft laws, according to the internal list of the People's Assembly in Egypt.

As a result, many MPs prefer resorting to an easier method when participating in the legislation process, i.e. present proposals to amend few articles. MPs do not turn to such procedure, either because they don't want to take the initiative, they don't have the required components and capabilities – mainly material ones –they are in charge of another parliamentary activity such as dealing with monitoring more than with the legislative role, or, as in the case of opposition and independent MPs, because the People's Assembly office does not support discussing their legislative proposals. As a result, it would constantly postpone their adoption till the end of the Parliament session,

and proposals would henceforth be invalid, unless concerned MPs renewed them for the next session (in this regard some MPs mention that years ago they have submitted legislative proposals to the People's Assembly, yet they have not been discussed, until their membership in the Parliament ends with the end of its constitutional mandate).

Among examples on MPs benefiting from parallel structures in submitting "minor" legislative initiatives there are: presenting comparative studies in order to have knowledge of laws and decisions implemented in some other developed countries, and try to present similar proposal. Such initiatives are formulated by businessmen MPs, especially on the economic level, such as draft laws proposals on import and special economic zones. Some of them would ask advisors or translators to prepare these proposals, mainly those emanating from conventions or international organizations like economic partnership agreements, and tariff agreements.

There are also initiatives from MPs that take the form of recommendations or general guidelines issued by some governmental or non governmental international organizations among which are the ILO and its achievement in preserving the relation among employees and employers. This was reflected in MPs debates around the labor draft law. Some MPs took advantage of that and hurried to present legislative initiatives that were considered as amendments on the draft law submitted by the government.

The Democratic National Party has presented an example on that, by submitting a proposal to establish "the Human Rights National Council", as well as to "abolish capital punishment", and thus, according to some international recommendations.

b- Draft laws:
Almost all MPs seek to take part in draft laws discussions rather than submit full proposals. Individual divergences among MPs emerge during these discussions, depending on the quality and content of information and research services they get. Some would be influenced by interest parties' opinions which are affected by the submitted draft law in order to expose their thoughts and be informed of the main amendments they request, based on what an MP would take the floor. Others would examine the opinion of their constituency as to get them involved, and promote the link among voters and their constituency.

Services provided during draft laws discussions can be identified as follows:

International sources, such as organizations which make recommendations or guidance about some laws and legislative procedures, like money laundering law, the law on abolishing capital punishment, and establishing the Human Rights National Council for example. MPs can also take advantage of the some researchers' capabilities to translate and make an outline of international reports regarding discussed topic, such as reports of the UN specialized agencies. Although such reports are available to everybody, MPs rarely have access to them, through indirect ways, i.e. through parallel structures services.

Lobbies and interest groups: even if they don't have an institutional aspect in Egypt, they play a significant and important role in providing parliamentary information, data, and researches. Some MPs. For example, some MPs would ask for the help of some civil associations and institutions, namely those working in the field of human rights, and try to have knowledge of their points of views while they present to the People's Assembly projects related to human rights. Some MPs relied for example on these associations when the People's Assembly examined the communications draft law in 2003/2004, mainly regarding some articles related to personal freedom and communications control. It is worth noting that some meetings were and are still held with some business organizations about the draft law on competition regulation and anti- harmful monopoly practices. Moreover, they have benefited from professional unions in some laws on regulating their activities, such as the draft law on regulating accounting and auditing, and music professions.

Political parties: each party would have its own political orientation, seek to confirm it, and bind its MPs (if any) to adopt the party's path inside the Parliament. But it is the weakest link in the parallel structures system, where Egyptian parties lack in general human, technical, and material capabilities, and their stability and internal cohesion are fragile. Except for the ruling party, they can't get information from public institutions, and generally don't have a real power in the Parliament (the whole opposition represent 2-3 % of MPs, contrary to independent MPs). Consequently, they are not looking for enhancing their members in the Parliament as much as they call upon them to speak on their behalf and keep their symbolic presence in the Parliament.

Nevertheless, parties can sometimes have an information role before draft laws get to the Parliament, either via initiatives – through their MPs – by submitting draft laws proposals, as policies Secretariat in the governing body did in respect of the Human Rights National Council, the abrogation of the State security supreme courts (while keeping the emergency law and exceptional courts which implement it), as well as the nationality of an Egyptian woman from a foreigner man. Parties' role can be carried out by presenting their vision to members about the draft law subject to debate. Parties would hold periodic meetings for their MPs in the Parliament in collaboration with their specialized commissions in order to discuss the topics submitted to the Parliament, and exchange opinions about them (in a certain way), that can help reach a joint fashion adopted by the party and its MPs during discussions. Among well-known examples in this regard, is the periodic meeting of the National Party members each two weeks in the "Political Club" in order to agree on the next agenda of the People's Assembly, as well as the meetings of the Al Tajammuh Party, Al Wafd Party, and the Islamic Current.

In form, draft laws are shown to all political parties before being examined in the Cabinet "by virtue of an order from the President of the Republic since 2001". Parties, which are not represented in the Parliament, "are allowed" to express their opinion and participate in the decision making process; even if such methods were lacking or inactive as appropriate – due to parties carelessness – mainly those which are not represented in the

Parliament – and due to their poor capabilities or as they believe their activities are useless.

Parties have also the right to publish newspapers, through which they play a role in expressing their vision about draft laws or some of their articles. Parties often take care of this aspect.

c- International Agreements and Conventions

International agreements and conventions are alike Republic decisions when it comes to the fact that the Parliament role is only limited to ratifying them, and has not the right to amend them. International agreements and conventions are the main ceremonies during which parallel structures bend over to analyze them and present relevant information, since they are specialized and have a deep legal aspect.

Accordingly, since the People's Assembly role is to ratify (or theoretically reject) them, MPs role is then to be with or against them. MPs would then base their positions on the agreement's items or on its explanatory memoranda. Only few MPs would ask for specialists help in such situations; while the majority of MPs are interested in internal legislations and issues, namely under the light of the ruling party's domination in the People's Assembly, as well as the delay in submitting agreements and conventions, initially, to the People's Assembly. Basically, MPs participation in agreements is noted to be trivial where it doesn't exceed more than 10 – 15 % of MPs.

The reason for which some MPs are interested in agreements is that most of the latter are drafted in foreign languages – mainly in English – and need therefore a linguistic and legal knowledge in order to be dealt with. In this respect differences among MPs and individual contrasts appear clearly in this part where some MPs refer to variance between the original text and the text translated into Arabic.

Parallel structures' services take two main shapes in this regard: the first is to resort to a legal or specialized advisor regarding the agreement's subject in order to give the MP, requester of the service, advice and information. The second consists of gathering and analyzing what was published in mass media about the relevant agreement or convention to become the MP's background information.

Conclusion:
- The crushing majority of information and research services' parallel structures don't conduct studies on the situation after the law implementation, but most of them content themselves with enforcing the law. After the implementation, some problems and obstacles come up, and require a legislative amendment or critics about the law implementation situation presented by some MPs.
- When some laws are hastily adopted, necessary discussions are not achieved, and there would be a sort of a conflict among laws. In this case, parallel structures may not be able to give the appropriate advice or present necessary studies due to the rush in passing the law. Among the important

examples of such a rush there are: the law on economic special zones, and law on investment guarantees and incentives, where investors in many economic zones prefer to work under the cover of the law on investment guarantees and incentives than working under the law on economic special zones because of facilities and other advantages. Moreover, some laws abrogate articles in other laws without any serious checking and sufficient studies, such as the law on income tax that is meant to be submitted to the People's Assembly during December 2004, which stipulates the abrogation of some articles in the law on investment guarantees and incentives.

- Regarding agreements and conventions, the People's Assembly role is only to ratify them. Due to the leading party domination over the People's Assembly, the result is already known, where it is hard that the People's Assembly "rejects" an agreement signed by the President of the Republic who is at the same time the President of the leading party. Voting international agreements does not require a certain or special majority, regardless of its size, and therefore, most of MPs, mainly from the opposition, do not deploy more efforts during agreements discussions since they are aware that their effort will not impede the ratification of the agreement which is on the margin of discussions. Otherwise, they want to embarrass the government in the first place.

- MPs are affected by the "quick legislation" phenomenon, and most of them cannot exploit parallel structures services, for the majority of discussions and draft laws are voted fast, and the majority of draft laws are discussed at night, in what is known as "midnight legislations".

- Regarding the Republic decision laws, the role of the People's Assembly is limited to either approve or reject them. As a result, there is no large scope of discussion, since the party has the majority in the People's Assembly, and passing the decision becomes hence obvious. Most of MPs, who resort to special parallel structures, have their own team, and some of them would participate in these discussions as a means of expression and government critics, by encompassing the truth about the party hegemony and guarantying the majority which supports the Republic decision. In some way it is called to "abstain from voting", which gives the abstainer a chance to state the reasons of his abstention prior to the voting session, and gets again the chance to express his opinion on the subject.

- Most of parallel structures used by MPs in this case rather have a legal quality than a political and analytical quality, such as legal experts, lawyers, or consultative offices… and they are all insufficient and have limited activities.

(Second) The Use of parliamentary information and researches in monitoring

At the beginning, it should be known that the Parliament's formal structure (the Assistant General Secretariat) does not help MPs in their monitoring performance, as it should, that's why they mostly count on parallel structures for parliamentary information and research services when using monitoring tools, in comparison with the above mentioned

legislative role. It can be said that most of MPs rely on the "press" publications as a source of the object of monitoring tools they use.

Here are some examples of what was previously mentioned:

a- Interrogation

It is among the least used monitoring tools, since it implies accusations of failure against government or some minister. The government position in this case depends on two things: its position regarding the MP, and the nature on the minister or the ministry subject to accusations and whether this minister prefers confrontation or debate.

Interrogation request needs many "documents" which prove and confirm the MP's claims in order to be primarily enlisted on the agenda. In fact, the People's Assembly decided in 2001 not to consider any interrogation unless required and sufficient documents are available, with the People's Assembly having the final decision. Besides, interrogation is just enlisted on the People's Assembly agenda – in addition to interrogations on the same subjects– inasmuch as one interrogation per month. When it is submitted to debate, the government protests by using its information as correct data, and insists that the MP's data (he got from parallel structures) are mere guessing and a point of view, and may be "forgery and feigning of the truth".

For this reason, there is another "negative" or "undesirable" method through which the MP gets public "documents and files", i.e. by purchasing them – in exchange of money – from sources within the government, such as some servants in ministers offices, in governmental parties, or from the People's Assembly itself when the General Secretariat has data that are inaccessible to MPs.

If discussed, the interrogation allows the MP to speak absolutely as long as he can – where he can speak for a period ranging between a minimum of 20 minutes and around 50 minutes –. Then the concerned minister takes the floor, then the MPs speaks again for about 5 – 10 minutes to comment the government reply. Interrogation becomes one of the means which greatly require loads of information, in addition to the problematic of getting "documents" via "parallel means" too.

b- Questions

It is considered as the second tool and consists of asking the minister a question or a clarification about a certain topic, decision, or policy adopted by the minister or the ministry. In this case, the MP needs information so that he can describe the case, submit the clarification request, or get from the official information from the government. He also needs the services of technical assistants to help him formulate the question in a good, precise, and touching manner. The MP or his assistants may also rely, when formulating the question, on mass media, mainly press articles published in the column of local services and citizens' complaints.

The quantity of information that the MP needs differs whether the question is oral or written. In case the question is oral, the MP needs to deeply know and be informed of the problem or the clarification, in order to present the question in the general session, confront the government, and try to raise the subject. However, in case of a written question, the MP only needs, at the same time, an ability to make a precise, brief, and an accurate presentation. In this regard, he counts on professional assistants; some of them work in the People's Assembly, but would help him in an informal manner.

The MP can also choose the negative method, as he would purchase some documents from certain parties, administrations in these public services, or ministries in order to reinforce his question in the Parliament.

c- Notification Requests

It is the third monitoring tool. When the MP submits the notification request, he assumes that the minister is not aware of the subject or the situation about which he informs him. Criticism in this tool is less than the one in the question. The notification request is also oral or written. Many MPs depend on the press, personal positions, or on the positions of people living in the constituency when presenting the notification request. They also talk on behalf of people living in the constituency and about their local problem.

Some MPs may rely on their own offices to present technical support or on their offices in constituencies, which receive citizens' demands (it is usually called: Office of MP X at the service of citizens). The latter provide them with new supplies for renewed life problems and situations. As for advisory and professional offices, they include some members of staff to set up a pack of notification request in all fields.

d- Urgent Records

They are the fourth monitoring tool and do not largely differ from knowledge requests, but are direct and refer to an accident or an urgent event, and are presented to the People's Assembly by the MP before the agenda starts. Drafting urgent records requires an accurate follow up of events. The role of assistants, informal structures, and press becomes obvious here, and reinforce the MP's capacity to respond continuously to current affairs that occur suddenly and need a direct and quick contact with parallel structures.

Urgent records may turn into another monitoring tool, such as question, if the MP can highlight a situation through such records, or accuse the government or the concerned ministry of failure.

e- Decision or Desire Proposal

Members in the People's Assembly rarely use decision proposal. As for desire proposal, it is more common since it more like local demands than a monitoring tool of the government public policies.

Desire proposals help framing the relation between the Parliament and the government, where the Proposals and Complaints Commission discusses all of the proposal's aspects, appoints specialists and all concerned parties, and takes a decision that it submits to the People's Assembly and recommends its approval.

There is here a diversity of information sources where the MP counts on his assistants to justify his proposal and submit it the Commission (for example: the desire proposal about establishing a school, factory, or a police station in some governorate…). The Commission would then invite the governor, the chief of the city or the district where it is located, the under secretary, and the security agent in the area in order to discuss the subject and reach a decision. Then it discusses the government position regarding the proposal – whether it approves or rejects it – and therefore, information and date presented by each party would influence the Commission's decision. Those discussions may also produce other parliamentary monitoring tools.

f- General Discussion Requests

They are the least monitoring tools to be discussed or used, since they don't exceed four or five requests during the People's Assembly session, and none of them may be debated by the People's Assembly. They suppose that there is an important issue which needs further discussions and thoughts to be put forward until reaching an agreement with the government. General discussion requests are often about issues that were raised a lot in questions and notification requests, such as the general discussion request on threads and textile industry where more than 20 questions and notification requests were presented, as well as the discussion request on the failure to organize the World Cup which was submitted with some interrogations, one question, 46 notification requests, and an urgent records for example.

Since the general discussion request is based on reconsidering one of the public policies which were previously adopted by the government and the People's Assembly, members who present the request (at least twenty members) need knowledge and awareness of the issue, i.e. comprehensive information and researches. One of MPs raises the issue and its importance, while there are one or some members who get in the way of conducting such study, and would consequently need parallel structures to gather and arrange data, and reinforce the MPs capacity to convince the People's Assembly of the importance and efficacy of reconsidering some public policies.

Were it not for the government opposition (and the leading party) to using this significant monitoring means, the role of parallel structures would have been greater, thanks to the properties of this monitoring tool, such as:
- Its easy technical system since it doesn't abide by the legal frame as draft laws.

- The ability to raise thoughts and initiatives without constraint.
- It is a good chance for MPs to talk, and a good occasion to present points of view.
- There is a exchange of thoughts and information with the government, and it is possible for the People's Assembly and government to reach a joint agreement on some measures and assistance instruments

g- Fact Finding Commissions, Field Visits

It is a means that need abundant information and data, mainly in fact finding commissions, for they depend on reports from monitoring parties such as the Accounts Central Service report. They also count on witnesses' statements, MPs visions, as well as on questions addressed to officials, which all increase the need to parallel structures. Examining the fact finding commissions' reports require a knowledge and awareness about the subject – i.e. access to information and researches – since it may lead to withdraw confidence or to indictment.

In this regard, a fact finding mission was formed by the People's Assembly at the end of 2003/2004 about the failure in organizing World Cup 2010, without any votes, where the commission interviewed relevant officials, and investigated with them, but couldn't discuss the report due to the delay of Accounts Central Service report on the same subject, and the government hampering the report discussion, until it was changed, and the Minister of Youth left, and the subject was therefore closed. This is was really happened, the Minister of Youth was substituted, and during the discussion of the fact finding commission's report in the People's Assembly, the government didn't answer the questions and critics addressed by MPs. At the end of discussions, the People's Assembly agreed on referring the report to the government in order to implement its recommendations.

As for commissions' reports field visits, they largely lean on the remarks written down by members who undertook the visits, and on information provided to them by specialists. During the discussion of these commissions' reports, members need researches, studies, and visions to take part in the discussion.

(Third) The use of parliamentary information and researches in commissions' researches

The main roles of specific and permanent commissions in the People's Assembly consist of: discussing the ministry's parallel policies, action plan, translating policies into expenses and discuss them while reviewing the general budget, presenting appropriate recommendations, while discussing the ministry's program, making reports on field visits, making fact finding commissions' reports, presenting a commissions report on international agreements and conventions, conducting some political and legal studies on some topics that fall under the commission's jurisdiction, presenting reports on monitoring tools referred to them, as well as reports on monitoring tools examined by the People's Assembly, when referred to them.

By exposing the commissions' previous tasks, we find that they need abundant information, data, and researches for them to be able to carry out their duties. Commissions are as well considered as the main "kitchen" of the People's Assembly work, where the majority of the legislative councils' activities take place in commissions. They are then submitted to the People's Assembly accompanied by the commission's opinion pending a final opinion. Deliberations and special records of draft laws proposals which are presented by members also take place within commissions. At the end, the role of the People's Assembly is to adopt – approve – the commission's opinion.

When carrying out their tasks, commissions resort to foreign expertise, whether legal expertise or political, economic, and social specialized expertise. For instance, commissions keep some consultants to help them achieve their tasks. Besides, they greatly depend on contacts with ministries, where they ask them to provide some information, researches, and studies in specific domains.

This part raises questions about transparency in the circulation of information and date between the People's Assembly and the government. Questions are also raised regarding the way to access or the possibility to have access to such information and data from ministries, namely under the light of contradicted data and information issued by some governmental parties, such as import and export figures, and strangely, demographic census.

Commissions have recourse in their work to specialized information, researches, and studies in order to achieve two things: first, help the commission as a whole in doing its work, and provide it with what it needs to elaborate requested visions and reports. Second, enhance MPs capacities while the subject is examined in the commission or in plenary sessions.

In the first case, the commission makes, at the beginning of any subject discussion, a simple vision paper of the subject's different axes. Then after hearing the opinions of participating people, it drafts a final report about the subject, which is submitted to the People's Assembly for consideration. It is worth mentioning that the parliamentary commission may be the service requester in this case, i.e. in order to help it provide its services. Among the means adopted by commissions to get parallel structures' assistance there are:

- Experts and specialists, permanently or temporarily to carry out a role or a specific task.
- Some reports made by specialized international parties, where commissions rely on some other reports and different information sources when preparing their own reports.
- Research centers and universities which present specialized academic studies about some topics and that help the commission draft its report.
- Some reports from governmental parties, such as monitoring parties' reports like administrative monitoring or the Accounts Central Service reports. Even if the latter should be accessible to all members, this doesn't happen in real.

In the second case, the member is the service requester, as when the MP is the head of the commission, and he largely depends on his own office to draw commissions' reports. He can also resort to his group of permanent consultants, on the Parliament's expenses. The head of the commission may (as other members in the commission may do) accidentally rely on a few consultants or specialized offices to assist him and assist the commission in discussing a specific topic.

(Forth) The use of parliamentary information and researches in the financial task

I.e. the jurisdiction of the People's Assembly in appraising the general plan for economic and social development, the State's general budget, the final accounts, the Socialist State Prosecutor's budget, as well as the People's Assembly budget.

MPs participation is low, namely during the discussion of final accounts. Their participation in the discussion of the plan and the budget is lower compared to that during the debate of the government statement, since the financial task requires specialty and accuracy to deal with figures, and needs an economic, arithmetic, cost accounts, revenue… analyses. All of this encourages MPs to seek the assistance of parallel structures; mainly those specialized in Public Finances.

It is however noted that most of MPs' discussions are about the local demands for their constituencies, i.e. they call for an increase in credits and budget without taking into consideration to transform these demands into public policies and pressure the government through this financial task.

(Fifth) The use of parliamentary information and researches in the political role

This role corresponds to the jurisdiction of the People's Assembly when discussing the Prime Minister's statement, drawing a report to reply to the government statement. It is one of the missions that attract the most MPs' participation (where a few MPs who take part in responding to the government program reach around 85%). The government exposes then its annual statement in the People's Assembly which establishes a special commission headed by the Speaker of the People's Assembly to study and respond to the statement. The General Secretariat presents to the People's Assembly a presentation comparing between the government statement and the response commission's report. The People's Assembly discussions of this report extend over many weeks, and a larger number MPs have the opportunity to participate.

Consequently, parallel structures are needed and demand on their services increases to respond to the government statement. Each MP has about few minutes (an average of 5-10 minutes), and in order to exploit this short period, he needs specialized assistants to draw an easy-language intervention, and compare the government's previous promises to next year promises. The MP needs, hence, efforts in analysis and discussion more than in terms of drafting for example (as it is the case in legislations). The MP usually provides his assistants with these reports and asks them to prepare a brief speech and a memorandum to of detailed remarks to be attached to the session's minutes. In all cases, he records his positions in the minutes, looks for gaining the confidence of voters and

public opinion, improving his image, and appearing like a scrupulous debater. MPs also are keen on expressing their local demands – mainly those of their election constituencies – when discussing the statement to satisfy voters.

The MP's office acquires more importance when reading the statement and making a follow up on the government's previous statement and promises, on what it achieved or failed to achieve in order to be subject to debate. This is the task of the MP's special office, or he can resort to special offices to undertake this task.

Some MPs know how to benefit from these discussions and turn to parallel structures in an attempt to draw up a new or parallel government program (shadow policy). Some MPs may devote themselves to a specific matter or issue to offer different alternatives. As a result, most of MPs are interested in certain topics in the government program, which keep pace with their technical and professional field. They also take into account the specialty of parallel structures assisting them (as being specialized in economic, administrative, or political issues, and foreign affairs…).

The parallel structures' role becomes obvious when conducting a follow up and dealing with accuracy, or when setting out the government's promises and to which extent it has fulfilled these promises. This matter might be a source to set up different monitoring tools.

2. When used outside the Parliament

The MP may use parallel structures services for purposes outside the Parliament, such as conducting researches and conference work papers, during discussions in his bloc or political party, or for personal purposes (helping a family member who has exams or has to make researches…).

a- In discussions/conferences outside the Parliament

With regards to using these information services in conferences and forums, these conferences may have a parliamentary aspect (such as meetings of international parliamentary organizations, or his participation as a Parliament member in an international conference). They can also be non parliamentary conferences (such as the participation of a Parliament member, who is at the same time a business man, in a conference on one of his businesses or about his field of academic specialty…).

The importance of information and researches and how to use them differ according to the type of the member and the nature of the conference, and whether it is held locally or abroad (mainly when he prepares his speech in a foreign language). For example, when parliamentary information and researches are used abroad, the member considers them more important than when being discussed on the local level, due to their impact on the image of the member, the People's Assembly, and the State, especially if he is a member in the ruling party, for he is unofficially tasked with defending the government and its

achievements in Egypt, reflecting the progress in democracy, or talking about the history and the "ancient character" of the Egyptian Parliament.

On the local level, parliamentary information and researches are used in some meetings or in local or international conferences, taking the form of support to the Parliament, the party, the position of the member himself, or to some decisions or legislations he was interested in. This is namely expressed by members in the National Party. As to members in the opposition, they are likely to underline negative aspects in the Parliament or attack the government position during discussions.

Parliamentary information and researches are also used by parliamentary delegations, among representatives of the Egyptian Parliament, or delegates of the People's Assembly or the government, as they take part in Arab and international, parliamentary and non parliamentary, meetings and forums. In this case, the delegation abides by official instructions given by government. Nevertheless, active members have a great chance to resort to parallel structures to provide them with more detailed information and answers about bodies taking part in these conferences, prepare an overview about the hosting country, and may be make presentations and suggestions about the agenda, or final recommendations and draft decisions issued by the conference. MPs, who are members in these delegations, became less dependent on the "portfolio" they get from the People's Assembly, as for speeches that were previously made to each member or formal, outdated, and inadequate information regarding the hosting country. They became more reliant on parallel structures services, mainly offices and experts specialized in the theme of the conference and the hosting country.

2- The sue of parliamentary information and researches in political/party activities

A small number of MPs use parliamentary information and researches for the purpose of the party, while, to certain extent, the opposite takes place. However, some MPs may use parliamentary information and services in order to establish new political parties for example, or modify some of the parties' tendencies or objectives. For instance, the establishment of new political parties requires documents, such as laying down the party's program and objectives, which needs considerable parliamentary-like studies and researches to be added to the party's program and fundamental principles. In this respect, parallel structures provide members with the party's project.

3- The use of information for some private services

 The use of parliamentary information and researches in favor of private interests and goals can be viewed in three issues: to simplify formalities, exchange interests, or in return for posts or roles.

Information and researches can be a means for some MPs to achieve some personal objectives with some public parties and interests, some information parties, or among MPs. Moreover, access to information and researches can be part of the previous objectives, as when a journalist provides some MP with documents in exchange for

interests, and to appoint this journalist as his media advisor, while the MP makes use of these information and researches and of this journalist for the sake of appearing in the media, to shed the light on his role in the Parliament, convince the public opinion to support him, or draw the attention of his constituency whenever general elections are soon to be held.

Second angle: Who is the service requester?

Service requester can be classified in three main categories:
1- Member: in one of the leading positions like (the President of the People's Assembly, any of the two Speakers, or a head of specific and permanent commissions), an ordinary member, or the leader of the majority, of independent members, or the opposition.
2- Commissions of the People's Assembly: In this case, the commission can be the service requester, like when having recourse to experts and consultants outside the People's Assembly, or asking for studies and reports to be made about some topics submitted to the commission.
3- The General Secretariat or the technical body of the Parliament itself: The Parliament's Technical Secretariat asks for services and researches on some fields related to performance. This is obvious in the training of the Parliament staff or in the likeness and exchange of expertise with other Parliaments.

Examples are as follows:

1- <u>When the service requester is a member</u>

If the member holds a leading post in the Parliament, such as being the President of the Parliament, he has the right, contrary to other members, to request from the Accounts Central Service reports on some matters. He is also the one who approves this type of requests presented by members.

Besides, the president of the Parliament depends, sometimes, on a large group of consultants regarding many issues. There is for example a media advisor, a legal advisor, as well as an economic advisor…on which the President of the People's Assembly relies to perform almost all activities. An advisor may be appointed by courtesy regardless of his post. The President of the People's Assembly could depend on other international and parties and institutions in what is known as parliamentary diplomacy, which can be considered as the President's main sources of parliamentary information and researches.

If the member is one of the two Speakers, he may resort to institutions and unions under his command, such as the Egyptian Labor Union in the case he is the People's Assembly Speaker on behalf of employees. He can also depend on requests and complaints he receives from parties under his command due to his close relation with the Executive power, and may be not for being a member in the Parliament or even as

a Speaker of the People's Assembly. As for the People's Assembly speaker on behalf of classes, he is assigned as the head of the special commission to respond to the government statement. He relies on some reports and studies presented by structures outside the General Secretariat, such as the Central Bank reports, the monthly and quarterly reports of the Central Bank and some ministries. He can also depend on human development reports in the Arab world or worldwide.

In case the service requester is the Head of any special and permanent commissions, Heads of permanent commissions usually resort to a team of assisting advisors, with a difference on the level of the team's continuity (permanent or temporary). This team is connected to the Head of the commission's office. The People's Assembly General Secretariat has recourse to some advisors for a period of time in favor of commissions. Most of them are legal or professional advisors. Some of the Heads of commissions depend too on their own assisting offices, as well as on some studies and researches presented by different research centers and universities.

When the member is outside leading posts, things differ whether the member is from the majority party, from independent or opposition parties. The difference is related to types of parallel structures on which the member depend. For instance, members of the National Party rely on governmental structures or on university research centers which are the least to resort to opposition and criticism. As for members in the opposition and independent members, they look for the most independent centers having a tendency to opposition or criticism. Members in the majority party could get some studies or party visions to follow, which does not regularly happen with opposition parties.

The member can make use of some meetings, conferences, or seminars he attends or is provided with the scientific substance issued in such meetings. Consequently, the approach of this substance varies whether the member is independent, from the opposition, or from the National Party.

2- When the service requester is a People's Assembly commission

The service request varies from one commission to the other, and differs with parallel structures it deals with. Resorting to parallel structures can for example mean resorting to experts and advisors outside the People's Assembly, and it can be done on a regular or on occasional basis. It can also be done through a request to access to studies and reports on some topics submitted to the commission, made by some governmental parties, civil society institutions or trade unions.

The commission may summon some NGOs or trade unions to ask them about some issues or matters it received, or ask consultants and specialists about draft laws subject to discussions.

3- The service requester is the People's Assembly General Secretariat

The Parliament General Assembly may request services and researches from local and international technical bodies about any fields regarding performance or to the training process of employees or MPs; such as technical support services offered to employees and MPs through US Aids, and the program on human capacity building for employees in the People's Assembly and the State Council, where training services were provided to employees as well as workshops for MPs.

A relation may exist among the Parliament General Secretariat and the General Secretariats of other Parliaments with regards to exchanging visits, expertise, and reports, providing employees or members of other Parliaments with training programs, or providing technical assistance in some cases.

Third angle: Who is the service provider?

Parallel structures are among the main affluent which have an influence on MPs performance, yet they cannot replace or compete with the assisting General Secretariat, but they provide information and research services in parallel with the People's Assembly General Secretariat. Sometimes they make up for the lack of the General Secretariat services (mainly in specialized issues and comparative researches).

Through this approach, parallel structures can be classified as follows:

1- Governmental and non governmental structures

There are governmental and non governmental structures and institutions.

As to governmental structures and institutions, they can be considered as structures that provide the People's Assembly with services, like the reports of Accountants Central Service – even if all MPs do not have access to them – as well some reports issued by monitoring bodies, such as the administrative monitoring which submits its reports upon the request of a member – all MPs do not have access too. Some governmental parties present their reports that are available to all MPs – upon their request – as the anti-dumping service, the Central Bank monthly reports, or some reports issued by ministries. Universities may provide some studies and visions, or the outcomes of international conferences they held, to which MPs are invited. These outcomes are sent to MPs or to the Parliament. Some public opinion measuring bodies may send their polls to the Parliament to be informed about public opinion and their basic needs.

As for non governmental parallel structures, they can be classified as: local and international structures. Regarding local structures, they may be alike parliamentary expertise houses which offer MPs advisory services or provide them with technical support in some fields upon demand and supply. Local structures may also be NGOs, or may have interests and play the role of lobbies, such as worker associations in the

case of the labor law, or the traders unions during the discussion of the draft law on the regulation of accounting and audit, etc.

They can be private research centers aiming at providing services for money. These services can be specialized in some fields such as legal or economic research centers, or centers aiming at providing requested services as a whole, i.e. not specialized.

International structures can be represented by international organizations or bodies with a governmental capacity, such as the United Nations and all relevant bodies. They can also be non governmental or unofficial international bodies that present recommendations such as human rights organizations, the World Health Organization, or the International Labor Organization. These parties can provide the Parliament with general services, or some MPs may use their reports and initiatives during the Parliament discussions. For instance, the United Nations have sent recommendations about the money laundering law to the Parliament, but MPs can get other recommendations to be adopted in the People's Assembly, such as the initiative of the National Party on the amendment of the nationality law.

2- <u>Structures providing remunerated or free services</u>

It is worth mentioning that one of the most important factors in providing remunerated services is money. Undoubtedly, money greatly affects the quality of provided information and studies, however, it is not money itself but the person who will provide the service, how specialized he is, his capacity to analyze data, and how accurate his information and studies are, as well as data and information he has, and the real experience of the person in providing studies and analyses.

Examples of parallel structures in this case are the following:
- Employees in the Parliament: since some members would rely on some employees in the Parliament to offer them services in their own offices in exchange for remuneration for a period of time, and take advantage of researchers' expertise and training in this field or their capacity to infer the course of discussions in the Parliament.
- Experts and advisors (permanent or temporary): members can resort to advisors as when the member is the Head of a specific commission or an ordinary MP. These experts and advisors may work on a permanent basis in the member's offices or on a temporary basis to carry out a certain service. The member or the commission may rely on an advisory bureau, but such advisory bureaus are rare, hence, existing offices are not particularly specialized, which is definitely reflected on the quality and reliability of provided analyses, especially in their parliamentary aspect.
- Remunerated full-time assistants: the member can have recourse to a private office to provide him with technical services, unlike offices specialized in services and relation management with citizens in constituencies.
- Research centers and institutions (such as universities and research centers…): the member can depend on official research centers in exchange for money to get research services. One or a group of members may, for

example, rely on opinion poll services regarding some issues, on which they build their own opinions. They can also attend some international conferences taking place in universities, and implement the relevant recommendations they find appropriate. One of the members may task some of these research bodies to conduct studies or reports on a question subject to discussion in the Parliament.

- NGOs: they can be advisory organizations which provide services for money but without being a profit-making organization (as being contractual or voluntary), and carry out a bunch of requests or services aiming at facilitating the work of MPs and certain sectors in the Parliament and providing them with technical support.

- These organizations may seek to achieve some special interests, i.e. play the role of lobbies, such as professional associations.

- They can also play the role of interests' achievement by providing information services in order to achieve their own interests (such as media, or some ministries and governmental bodies). It can be a special interest for this organization leadership, such as assistance and advertising during elections.

- Mass media are considered as parallel structures which greatly influence the discussions course in the Parliament. Many MPs can rely on mass media, namely the press to adopt many ideas. It can also be one of assistance means in providing some of the Parliament monitoring tools.

- Mass media can lead the public opinion in some questions or in important debated issues. They can also play a significant role in MPs' promotion campaigns namely during election periods. Some journalists can be undercover sources (who prefer to be anonymous) when providing some information. They would provide some information and data in order to achieve an interest or exchange interests with some MP.

In conclusion…

Members in the Parliament need information services, yet, MPs are not legally bound to resort to information sources (formal and informal) and conduct researches and studies, but most of MPs – especially in Arab councils – content themselves with dealing with government data with what it wants to be passed in the Parliament. It is a personal effort deployed by MPs or a compliance with an attitude put forward by other members. In other words, when MPs carry out an additional homework to be well informed about the topic submitted to discussion in the Parliament, and use "parallel" information sources in order to make up for the official information sources related to the Parliament, it will be, in the first place, a personal choice.

The Parliament General Secretariat cannot be considered as the only body in charge of data, information, and research services in the Parliament, since there is a significant trend to depend on parallel structures. But the lack in information is not necessarily the reason behind the Parliament's weak performance, despite the importance of the issue. However, the issue would acquire more importance if there is

an integrated system which would set the foundation of the Parliament – government relation, and if citizens are able to choose the best candidates to represent them through free and honest elections, without interference, and under an atmosphere that would draw public opinion leaders and educated people to run the elections.

Finally, the motive that pushes MPs to use parallel structures and benefit from them to achieve the aspired goal of reform, without going into details about what comes first, parliamentary reform or political reform, "what comes before the chicken or the egg". Talking about parliamentary reform in the Arab world was not appropriate or even possible in the past decades. If someone did, he would probably be described as superficial and illusive, since the Parliament never had a true say in political upgrading projects or a serious role in thoughts about the democratic progress in the Arab world. However, most of political projects in the Arab world were, until recently, directed to change objective social conditions – on the economic, social, and cultural levels – in order to be in conformity with political upgrading. They call to loosen the grip of authority, get rid of the world powers hegemony to make self and free progress possible in Arab societies.

Political life in the Arab world has drastically changed that the study and activation of the Parliament action have become not only a substantial issue but also a vital one and, a reasonable request of democratization.